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MACAU'S VACCINATION SCHEME WILL GIVE PEOPLE GREATER ASSURANCE WHEN TRAVELING TO THE CITY, SAYS MGTO DIRECTOR P2

CHINESE-STATE OWNED FIRMS INVESTING IN THE EU TO FACE CHALLENGES: SCHOLAR P4

LAWRENCE HO IS EXPECTING SIGNS OF RECOVERY AS EARLY AS MID-MARCH PLACING BETS ON RETURNING PLAYERS P5

China With the coronavirus well under control in China and cinemas running at half capacity, moviegoers are smashing China's box office records, with domestic productions far outpacing their Hollywood competitors. February marked China's all-time biggest month for movie ticket sales, which have so far totaled 11.2 billion yuan (\$1.7 billion).

Hong Kong began administering its first COVID-19 vaccines to the public Friday, kicking off its program that will eventually offer free vaccinations to all 7.5 million residents. People age 60 and older and health care workers are among the some 2.4 million people currently prioritized to receive vaccines at community centers and outpatient clinics across Hong Kong. The government said registrations for the first two weeks of the program are full.



South Korea's Disease Control and Prevention Agency has allowed health workers to squeeze extra doses from vials of coronavirus vaccines developed by AstraZeneca and Pfizer. The decision came after some health workers who were administering the AstraZeneca shots reported to authorities that they still saw additional doses left in the bottles that had each been used for 10 injections.

Philippines received its first batch of COVID-19 vaccine yesterday, among the last in Southeast Asia to secure the critical doses despite having the second-highest number of coronavirus infections and deaths in the hard-hit region. A Chinese military transport aircraft carrying 600,000 doses of vaccine donated by China arrived in an air base in the capital in a late-afternoon event beamed live on state-run TV.

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RIGHT TO PROTEST

Secretary André Cheong said that the public should refer to the interpretation of the PSP in regards to the non-residents' rights to protest - sparking debate among lawmakers P3



WORLD PRESS PHOTO
HKBU CANCELS CONTROVERSIAL EXHIBITION, CITING COVID-19 P5

PFIZER-BIONTECH INOCULATION KICKS OFF THIS WEDNESDAY P2

COVID-19

MRNA VACCINES ARRIVE, GOV'T REOPENS JAB REGISTRATIONS FOR SENIORS

THE Pfizer-BioNtech mRNA vaccine produced in Germany, and distributed in cooperation with Fosun, arrived on Saturday in Macau and it will be made available to the public from this Wednesday.

EU's European Medicines Agency certified that the mRNA vaccine can be administered to people aged 16 or more and it is suitable for people over the age of 59.

On February 24, the SAR government suspended use of the inactivated vaccine developed by Chinese state-owned pharmaceutical company Sinopharm Group for those aged 60 years old or above.

The move was made to ensure the city's vaccination scheme would run smoothly, as some of the elderly who registered for the scheme failed to meet the two prerequisites for receiving the inactivated vaccines, including being at high-risk from Covid-19 and being physically fit.

The government resumed online vaccine registrations yesterday for senior citizens aged



60 years old or above, after the 100,425 doses of the mRNA vaccine by German drug manufacturer BioNtech landed in the region.

The current system requires the elderly to fill in an online

evaluation form, which has more than 10 questions about their medical history and health status.

Once the survey is complete, the system will inform those who are not classified as ha-

ving a high-risk of exposure to Covid-19, that they will only be allowed to take the BioNtech vaccine or the AstraZeneca vaccine, a form of replication-defective adenovirus vector vaccine which is expected to arrive

in Macau in June this year.

Meanwhile, there is no upper age limit on those who are eligible for the mRNA vaccine, provided that they are aged 16 or above and are in good health.

The second batch of 100,000 mRNA vaccines is expected to arrive by the end of March.

400,000 DOSES OF SINOPHARM'S VACCINES ARRIVE

The second batch of the 400,000 doses of Sinopharm's inactivated vaccine arrived in Macau yesterday afternoon.

Director of the Health Bureau (SSM), Lei Chin Ion, yesterday told the press that the SAR has already received a total of over 600,425 doses of vaccine, which is enough for over 300,000 residents.

The doctor also added that a few of those who have been vaccinated have had mild adverse reactions such as fever and dizziness.

For Lei, the current vaccination appointment numbers in Macau is considered satisfactory. **MDT**

Vaccinations will reassure travelers, MGTO anticipates

HONEY TSANG

THE city's vaccination scheme will give people greater reassurance when travelling to Macau once the border reopens, director of the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes told the media on the sidelines of an event on February 27.

Fernandes disclosed that daily visitor arrivals into Macau during "recent days" — with the best day recording around 19,000 visitors — were higher than those during the Chinese New Year (CNY) holiday.

Considering the city's vaccination scheme and China's growing vaccination rate, Fernandes said she hopes the scheme offer travelers



greater confidence as the border reopens for travel.

As of 9 p.m. February 26, a total of 29,353 Macau ID holders had registered to receive a Covid-19 vaccine. Among them, 25,897 signed up for Sinopharm's inac-

tivated vaccine, 3,369 for BioNtech's mRNA vaccine and the remaining 87 for the AstraZeneca vaccine, a form of replication-defective adenovirus vector vaccine.

China was the first country to mandate vaccination

against Covid-19 in July last year.

As of February 28, China had administered a total of 40.5 million vaccine doses, as the country with the second-highest number of vaccinations worldwide,

just behind the 72.8 million doses given by the United States, according to a vaccine tracker compiled by Bloomberg.

This figure translates to 2.89 injected doses for every 100 persons in China. This is relatively low compared to other countries, as Israel, the U.K. and the U.S. have given 88.4, 30.6 and 21.9 doses for every 100 persons respectively.

Globally, upwards of 236 million doses of vaccine have been administered in 103 countries so far.

Fernandes also stated that the local tourism industry is aspiring to launch more quality travel routes and tourism products to entice mainland holidaymakers — most of whom are considered as

free independent travelers (FITs).

MGTO will offer the industry support to promote the city's tourism offerings, she said.

Macau saw a total of 90,615 tourist arrivals during the seven-day CNY Golden Week in 2021 from February 11 to 17, down 65.3% from 261,454 in the same period last year.

The decline was attributed to travel advisories issued by China's municipal governments, which advised their residents to avoid traveling during the CNY period.

Overall, the average daily arrival numbers during the holiday stood at 12,945, falling short of Fernandes' previous forecast of around 16,000 to 20,000 arrivals.

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JULIE ZHU

André Cheong refers to PSP on non-locals' right to protest

SECRETARY for Administration and Justice André Cheong has recommended that members of the public refer to the interpretation of the police authority, especially the Public Security Police Force (PSP), to understand Macau's regulations on non-local people's rights to assemble and protest.

On Friday, during the police press conference of the Executive Council, Cheong was questioned about both his personal views as well as his professional understanding of the city's recent debate over PSP's statement that non-locals are not allowed to be involved in public demonstrations.

Secretary for Security Wong Sio Chak made this clear recently, citing Article 43 of the Basic Law, saying that equal rights are not absolute for migrant workers.

"I have nothing else to add since the security authority [has] provided some explicit explanation[s] regarding the interpretation of the law," said Cheong. "The security

authority already gave a comprehensive explanation."

Article 43 of the Basic Law says that "persons other than Macau residents in the Macau Special Administrative Region shall, in accordance with the law, enjoy the rights and the freedom of Macau residents prescribed in this chapter."

Cheong applied his answers to multiple and similar questions raised by the media.

According to Cheong, when implementing the law, police officers are entitled to interpret the law based on their own understanding.

"I think it is normal for [everyone] to have different opinions and interpretations about the law. It is normal that we have discussions.

RENATO MARQUES (MDT ARCHIVE)



Local residents demonstrate on the streets

CHAN WA KEONG: NO LAW REGULATING NON-CITIZENS' DEMONSTRATION RIGHTS

ON the sidelines of the Legislative Assembly's Spring Lunch on Friday, lawmaker and lawyer Chan Wa Keong expressed that even though the Basic Law says that non-Macau-citizens can also enjoy the right to demonstrate, the city's demonstration law does not have regulations suggesting that non-citizens in Macau can assemble for a demonstration.

Chan's interpretation was that the Basic Law says that non-citizens en-

joy the rights "in accordance with the law" but that the "law" refers to the ones established in accordance with the Basic Law. The "law on demonstration and assembly rights only talks about Macau local residents but not migrant workers, so that there is no legal basis for non-local workers to rally or demonstrate in Macau."

For Chan, the PSP's reply does not contradict the Basic Law. "I can't see that there is any need to amend the concerned law," he said.

If the concerned individuals disagree with the law enforcement's interpretation of the law, there are other methods to resort to. If there is no other way, then they can resort to judicial methods," said the Secretary.

Even when asked about his professional opinion as the Secretary for Administration and Justice, Cheong still stuck to his answer that "the security autho-

riety already has a very explicit explanation."

AL WILLING TO LISTEN TO PUBLIC OPINIONS

Chairman of the Legislative Assembly (AL) Kou Hoi In has said that demonstrations and assemblies must be held in accordance with the law and there might be different opinions regarding the law. The legislative body hopes to hear all

kinds of opinions.

Kou thinks that if society demands changes, it is possible for law amendments to be considered and arranged.

In addition to his comment on non-citizens' right to assemble, Kou also said that the AL is open and willing to listen to the opinions of the community in regard to opening the current closed-door AL committee meetings.

ELECTIONS 2021

Au Kam San will not run for the AL

LAWMAKER Au Kam San has decided not to run in the 2021 Legislative Assembly (AL) elections, but he will continue to focus on local community workers in other ways. "I am a Macau resident," he said to highlight this.

On the sidelines of the Legislative Assembly's Spring Lunch, the pro-democracy lawmaker explained that he is leaving for personal reasons and that he has done what he can during his 20-year tenure at the AL.

According to him, what the AL could achieve is "very little [...] due to the limitations of the political system."

"I have been a lawmaker

for over 20 years and I am already bored, as we have spoken about the same problems and demands over [and over] again. [...] Many bills have remained unchanged after so many years and it is time [for me] to step down," he said.

The veteran lawmaker also commented on the controversy surrounding migrant workers' right to protest, stressing that there is no such thing as non-residents not being able to exercise the right to assemble and protest.

Au cited Article 43, which he said clearly states that residents can exercise the right to demonstrate. JZ/LV

TOURISM

CHUI SAI PENG EXPRESSES HOPE THAT BEIJING COULD CLASSIFY THE SAR A 'DOMESTIC REGION'

LAWMAKER Chui Sai Peng hopes that more policies can be put forward this year to let people know that, unlike, in his view, Taiwan and Hong Kong, Macau is a place where people can travel with "peace of mind."

Speaking on the sidelines of the Legislative Assembly's (AL) Spring Lunch on Friday, Chui remarked that in Beijing there are apps available that allow users to check the quarantine policies of different cities as well as the quarantine policies of the user's current location.

Chui hopes that the

LYNZY VALLIES



motherland will support Macau by allowing the region to release information on these apps letting

people know that Macau is "very safe."

Mainland China's relationship to Macau chan-

ges according to specific matters. In some contexts, the SAR is categorized as "overseas."

"Macau is part of China, but in terms of national information, in many situations Macau has been classified as an overseas region, which has stopped many domestic tourists from travelling to Macau. Moreover, the classification has caused many passengers to choose to fly to Zhuhai, Guangzhou and other places instead of taking flights directly to Macau, thus weakening the competitiveness of the local aviation industry," said Chui.

The lawmaker hopes the motherland will classify Macau as a "domestic region" during this time, as he believes it may be helpful to accelerating Macau's economic recovery. JZ

CHINESE STATE-OWNED FIRMS INVESTING IN THE EU TO FACE CHALLENGES UNSEEN AT HOME: SCHOLAR

ANTHONY LAM

CHINESE enterprises, many of which are state-owned, may face challenges when attempting to break into the European market, where participation by Chinese-owned businesses is restricted, an international law academic has said on the sidelines of a seminar.

The seminar, which was titled “Chinese State Owned Enterprises and EU Merger Control” and given by Alexandr Svetlicinii, associate professor and program coordinator of the Master of Law in International Business Law (English Language) at the University of Macau, analyzed the specifics of corporate governance of China’s state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and their assessment under EU merger control, which is reflected in the EU Commission’s screening of the notified economic concentrations.

“Merger controls apply to any kind of companies or investment in Europe,” the academic pointed out. He was then asked to identify the main challenges facing Chinese and Macau companies when they are in the course of investing

in Europe, particularly within the European Union.

“It doesn’t matter where the business owners come from – be they from China, from Macau or from any other territory – they will need to follow this set of rules,” Svetlicinii said.

The academic pointed out that there are three levels on which investors and investments are analyzed before they enter the market.

“Depending on the size of the transaction, they may need to get approval from the European Commission or from competition authorities in certain member states for smaller-sized transactions,” Svetlicinii explained.

These authorities will assess the effect of these investments or transactions on competitions in different markets, he said. If such authorities believe there will be a negative effect on competition, they may levy conditions.

“Another important framework the EU implemented last year is the approval of foreign investment based on the grounds of security and national security,” he said. “In special sectors that are very important or strategic to

EU member states, any kind of foreign investment must receive an approval from a different authority governing national security.”

According to the academic, this is another set of rules with which foreign investors need to abide. Meanwhile, non-EU investors may face other constraints.

“This year, the EU will possibly adopt a new set of rules about foreign subsidies. It means that if a foreign investor gets subsidized by a [non-EU] government, they will need to go through a special procedure, because this kind of subsidy may create distortions in the European market,” the academic remarked.

On the other hand, the Comprehensive Agreement on Investment concluded, in principle, last December. It involves China opening its door to EU enterprises.

The legal academic revealed that global scholars and lawyers are anticipating the implementation of the agreement to potentially effect Chinese companies doing business in Europe and vice versa.

The academic also spoke about his latest publication, a book on Chinese state-owned enterprises



ANTHONY LAM

Alexandr Svetlicinii

going global through the Belt and Road Initiative.

The main objective of the book is to demonstrate the conceptual and regulatory challenges of applying traditional merger as-

essment tools in cases involving Chinese state-owned enterprises due to the specifics in their corporate governance and the regulatory framework under which they operate in China.

GAMING

SUNCITY TO OPEN VIP CLUBS AT THE LONDONER, GRAND LISBOA PALACE

HONEY TSANG

MACAU’S junket Suncity Group is set to gain a firmer grasp of the market, as it plans to launch VIP gaming clubs at The Londoner Macao and Grand Lisboa Palace, the group confirmed to GGRAsia.

According to a report published on Friday by the news outlet, Suncity Group said it would “effectively control operating costs” and make workforce adjustments in order to gear itself up for the advent of the two VIP clubs in Cotai.

The junket group said that it has no plans to lay-off staff, but it did not specify whether it would close other clubs in Macau.

Founded in Macau in 2007, Suncity Group has operated VIP clubs in not only Macau, but also across the Asia-Pacific region, including Australia, the Philippines and Vietnam.

The group’s plan to set up two new VIP clubs in Ma-

cau comes as the Chinese government tightens its restrictions on illegal overseas gambling.

A newly-amended gambling law — which criminalizes anyone who organizes for citizens of mainland China to participate in gambling outside the country or the border, when involving a hefty sum or cases with serious consequences — will come into force today.

“The P.R.C. government is very keen to prevent capital outflows from the main-

land via unlawful methods, so the junkets are currently under heavy government pressure,” Steve Vickers, founder and chief executive officer of Steve Vickers & Associates Ltd, a specialist political and corporate risk consultancy, told the Times earlier.

“The junket sector is certainly down but is not completely out,” he stated, adding that the future is “unclear.”

In a release published by Suncity Group in July last

year, chief executive officer and director of the group Alvin Chau unveiled that the group is in a “financially robust” position, with a total fiscal reserve and cash flow allocated for daily operations standing at HKD10.58 billion and HKD18.6 billion respectively. In addition, it has an additional HKD16.5 billion in two of Macau’s banks at the time.

According to the official data, in 2021 the city is experiencing its eighth consecutive year with a yearly contraction in its number of licensed junkets. There were 85 licensed junket promoters in Macau in January 2021, down 10.5% from 95 in the same month last year.

ANGELA LEONG CONFIRMS GLP’S OPENING IN H1

SJM Holdings Limited has recruited a total of 1,200 local residents to work at the Grand Lisboa Palace (GLP) during the last recruitment season and expects to open in the first half of the year, managing director of SJM, Angela Leong, confirmed on the sidelines of the Legislative Assembly’s (AL) Spring Lunch.

Speaking to the press, Leong said that the group is currently waiting for the government to inspect and approve the Grand Lisboa Palace.

The newly-recruited employees will start working in

a staggered fashion.

The executive also added that it is expected that the pandemic will decrease the number of customers in Macau and that the company will abide by the government’s pandemic prevention guidelines. As for the mainland’s implementation of a new criminal law amendment from today, which strengthens the regulation of mainland residents’ overseas gambling, Leong pointed out that every place has its laws and pledged that SJM will abide by the law.

JUN LIU APPOINTED NEW RECTOR AT CITYU

PROFESSOR Jun Liu has been appointed rector of the City University of Macau (CityU) and will assume office today, CityU informed in a statement.

The institution described the appointment as being part of its mission and the values of social responsibility embodied within the university’s motto: “Rooted in Macau and Serving the Greater Bay Area.”

In a statement to the media, CityU noted that the appointment of the new rector is also part of continuing efforts to enhance the quality of teaching, raise research standards and attract talent. They appointed Liu following a global search to find the right person for such tasks.

Liu, an educator and scholar with over 40 years of language education experience, ser-

ved previously as vice president and vice provost for global affairs, dean of international academic programs and services, founding director of the China Center, and professor of Linguistics at Stony Brook University in New York between 2016 and 2021.

With broad experience in language and linguistics, he also served as associate provost for International Initiatives and Professor of Applied Linguistics at Georgia State University (2011-2016); and professor and head of the department of English, and assistant vice president at University of Arizona (1998-2011).

Liu received his Ph.D. from the Foreign and Second Language Education Program from the College of Education at the Ohio State University in 1996. **RM**

WORLD PRESS PHOTO

HKBU cancels exhibition, cites Covid-19 safety concerns

RENATO MARQUES

THE Hong Kong Baptist University (HKBU) has called off their hosting of the World Press Photo 2020 (WPP2020) exhibition. The exhibition was canceled on Friday afternoon, just three days before the event's expected launch date (March 1), the organizing committee informed via their official Facebook page.

"We are sorry to inform you that our venue partner, Hong Kong Baptist University, canceled the World Press Photo Exhibition 2020, just three days before it would [have] open[ed]," the organizers wrote, adding, "For over a year, our team in Hong Kong worked towards realizing this showcase of some of the world's best visual journalism, as a testament to the importance of visual storytelling and press freedom."

"We regret it for Hong Kong and for everyone who helped to bring this project to life," the organizers concluded.

As the Times previously reported, the exhibition should have been open from today until March 21, and was set to be hosted by The Institute for Journalism and Society at HKBU.

Later that same day, HKBU issued a statement noting that the event's cancellation was due to Covid-19 prevention measures and concerns regarding campus safety.

"After giving due consideration to campus safety and security, and the need to maintain pande-

RENATO MARQUES



mic control, the Hong Kong Baptist University considers that it is not an appropriate time to hold the 'World Press Photo Exhibition 2020' on its campus," the statement says.

A justification which, according to media sources in Hong Kong, was not well received by the organizers. According to the Hong Kong Free Press (HKFP) media outlet, event organizers expressed displeasure at HKBU's decision, which they believed was due to "political pressure."

In an email response to HKFP, organizers are quoted as saying:

"The university held a top-level emergency meeting on February 25 and decided it is neither the [correct] political nor pandemic climate for the event after all. They said the security and protection of their students would be at risk if the exhibition – which had been planned for months and was hours away from being installed – would go ahead."

The WPP2020 has been under fire, namely in Chinese territory, since it was launched. The exhibition includes an award-winning work from photojournalist Nicolas Asfour. Asfour is a Danish na-

tional who was born in Beirut, Lebanon and has worked for Agence France-Presse for 19 years.

The work, which portrays the social unrest and anti-government protests in Hong Kong, was considered controversial by many people.

The last-minute cancellation of the exhibition in the neighboring region comes amid growing concerns over censorship in its region, as authorities continue to pursue the punishment of those involved in the protests and crackdown on political dissent using the national security law – one of

the motivators of the protests.

Hong Kong was the second location within Chinese territory where the WPP2020 exhibition was to be held. The exhibition also faced difficulties in its first location, Macau, when it was suddenly ended without any notice or justification in October last year, after being held at the Casa Garden venue for just one week.

As the Times reported, the closure of the exhibition in Macau occurred 18 days earlier than expected, with local organizers Casa de Portugal em Macau only saying that the closure was occurring because of "management reasons."

According to Hong Kong media sources, using the Covid-19 pandemic as justification to close the exhibition is not convincing. Despite the pandemic, the university has held several public events, including a fashion show last Friday, the same day that the decision to close the WPP2020 was announced.

In a previous communication to the Times in late January this year, when it was announced that the exhibition was to be held at HKBU, senior lecturer and director of International Journalism at the Journalism Department of HKBU, Robin Ewing, confirmed that the exhibition would not undergo any changes and would feature all the winning photojournalism works.

"The Institute for Journalism and Society, part of the Journalism Department at Hong Kong Baptist University, is hosting the World Press Photo Exhibition 2020 in March. We have made no adjustments to the exhibition, and it will include all of the winning photos, as well as the winning photo interactive [display]," Ewing replied, adding, "We are aware of the early closure of the exhibit in Macau, but we trust that Hong Kong's law guaranteeing freedom of the press will continue to be respected."

GAMING

Lawrence Ho predicts Macau recovery in second quarter

THE gaming sector could begin showing signs of recovery as early as mid-March, said Lawrence Ho, chairman and CEO of Melco Resorts and Entertainment in a conference call after the company announced "positive results" for the last quarter of 2020.

"We remain optimistic on the recovery in Macau and continue to expect increased visitation in the near-term,"

said the executive.

With the further easing of travel restrictions between Macau and mainland China, he remains hopeful the market "will be strengthened by returning players."

Ho noted the increase of players during the last days of the Chinese New Year, which carried over to the rest of the month: "I do think it is really two or three months rather

than what we've been thinking for the past year which has been longer and longer."

He also said that Melco remains committed to its internationalization program (Cyprus, Japan) and its expansion in Macau.

"While impacted by Covid-19, Melco remains committed to its global development program. In Macau, construction on the ex-

pansion of Studio City is progressing. Upon completion, Studio City will offer approximately 900 additional luxury hotel rooms and suites, one of the world's largest indoor/outdoor water parks, a Cineplex, fine-dining restaurants, and state-of-the-art MICE space. Also in Macau, our facility upgrade works at City of Dreams are ongoing, with the fully renovated Nüwa

nearing completion," Ho said.

Melco Resorts & Entertainment saw its Adjusted Property EBITDA rising 170% quarter-to-quarter to USD53.4 million in the last three months of 2020.

The company's operating loss for the fourth quarter of 2020 was \$144.8 million, compared with operating income of \$173.4 million in the fourth quarter of 2019, the gaming operator announced on Thursday night.

The gaming concessionaire reported \$199.7 million in net losses, while net revenues dropped by 64% year-on-year to about \$530 million. PC

IAS TO ADD 200 MORE EARLY INTERVENTION SPOTS

The Social Welfare Bureau (IAS) has stated that it will add an extra 200 places for early treatment of developmental disorders and intellectual disabilities. IAS is planning to add to or relocate its current facilities in order to accomplish this. For now, IAS offers has a quota of 270 for early intervention at its four centers.

KIANG WU HOSPITAL INKS AGREEMENT WITH 2 HOSPITALS IN ZHUHAI

Kiang Wu Hospital has entered into an agreement with the Fifth Affiliated Hospital of Sun Yat-sen University and Zhuhai People's Hospital to enhance medical services in both cities. The scope of the partnership covers scientific innovation, mutual employment mechanisms, medical referral systems, and more.

HONG KONG

POLICE CHARGES 47 OPPOSITION ACTIVISTS UNDER SECURITY LAW

KARI LINDBERG,
SHAWNA KWAN & NATALIE LUNG

HONG Kong police charged dozens of opposition activists including Joshua Wong with violating the city's national security law, taking formal action against them less than a week before China's highest-profile annual political meeting.

Of the 55 opposition figures initially arrested in January, 47 were charged with conspiracy to commit subversion yesterday. They had previously been facing allegations of subversion. It is the largest mass charge under the new law since it went into effect last year.

The former lawmakers and activists were being detained pending a court appearance Monday, the police said in a statement. Some had been asked to report to the police's national security branch yesterday, more than a month earlier than scheduled.

They were arrested in January on suspicion of subversion for their roles in helping organize a democratic primary contest over



Benny Tai, pro-democracy activist, arrives at Ma On Shan police station, yesterday

the summer that drew more than 600,000 voters.

Wong - who testified before the U.S. Congress last year and was the subject of a Netflix documentary "Joshua: Teenager vs. Superpower" - was already behind bars. He is serving a sentence of over a year handed down in December

for a separate charge related to a protest in 2019; this is the first time he's been charged under the national security law.

Others charged yesterday include veteran activist Leung Kwok Hung, former lawmaker Alvin Yeung, and the ex-convener of Civil Human Rights Front, Jimmy

Sham, according to their respective Facebook pages.

The police did not charge American lawyer John Clancey, who was involved in the primary and was among those picked up in January, he told reporters after having his bail extended yesterday. He said he has to report to the po-

lice again in early May.

Police allege the primary, as well as plans to use a provision in the city's mini-constitution to vote down the budget and force the Hong Kong chief executive's resignation, were part of an illegal attempt to paralyze the city's government. The election was eventually postponed by a full year, with the government citing the coronavirus.

Beijing is tightening control over the Asian financial center after a historic wave of democracy protests gripped Hong Kong for months in 2019. The national security law carries sentences as long as life in prison depending on the severity of the offense.

While almost 100 people have been arrested under the new law, prosecutors had previously only brought charges against 10 of them. The most prominent is media mogul Jimmy Lai, who has been denied bail and is awaiting trial on charges that he colluded with foreign powers to impose sanctions or engage in hostile activities against Hong Kong or China.

China's annual parliamentary pageant - the National People's Congress - opens Friday in Beijing. Reforms to Hong Kong's electoral system that would give Beijing more control could come at this year's event, according to Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam. **BLOOMBERG**

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The houses are set in the heart of the World Heritage Site of the Douro Valley and its famous winery landscape where the world's Ports are produced. Both restored relics overlooking the Rio Douro, these eight rooms houses have been blessed with gorgeous wooden floors, plush queen beds and marble baths; the best have dazzling river views. But it is the welcome that makes this place stand out from the crowd.



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MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER



US signals it will implement rule curbing China tech threats

JENNY LEONARD

THE U.S. signaled it currently intends to go ahead with a Trump administration-proposed rule to secure the information-technology supply chain next month, a move that gives the Department of Commerce broad authority to prohibit transactions involving “foreign adversaries.”

The interim rule, which will allow Commerce to monitor transactions of governments including China's, was first proposed by the previous administration in January - days before Joe Biden's inauguration - and follows an executive order former President Donald Trump signed in 2019. The department said Friday it's accepting public comments on the plan through March 22, the same day it becomes effective.

Former Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross in the interim rule listed the governments of China, Russia, Iran, North Korea and Cuba as adversaries.

The rule is “intended to prevent foreign adversaries from exploiting vulnerabilities” in the information and communications technology-services supply chain, Commerce said in an emailed statement Friday. “Trustworthy information and communications technology and services are essential to our national and economic security and remains a top priority for

the Biden-Harris administration.”

Technology companies including International Business Machines Corp. say the rule, if implemented in its current form, would damage the economy.

“By the Commerce Department's own estimate, this rule would impose many billions of dollars in new compliance costs on millions of U.S. firms, including countless small businesses,” IBM Regulatory Affairs Vice President Christopher Padilla said. “Such a massive, overbroad, and economically damaging Trump-administration rule should not be on autopilot.”

There is widespread concern in the business community about the breadth of the rule and the precedent it would set in giving the agency blanket authority to interfere in transactions.

Earlier this month, the biggest trade associations, including the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, warned the Biden administration of the negative impact the rule could have on the economy and asked it to halt its implementation.

“The net impact of these negative consequences could undermine the much-needed economic recovery from the pandemic that is a priority of the administration and a central feature of the Biden-Harris American rescue plan,” the groups wrote in a Feb. 4 letter. **BLOOMBERG**

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MGM Continues its Philanthropic CNY Tradition for the Elderly

Right before the Year of the Ox, MGM held caring events to warm the hearts of the elderly in keeping with its philanthropic tradition. For the tenth consecutive year, the Company organized spring cleaning, provided haircuts and celebrated CNY with them, benefiting a total of 470 senior citizens.

Offering Spring Cleaning to Seniors for Ten Straight Years



This year, MGM partnered with a small-to-medium-sized cleaning company to carry on the decade-old tradition of spring cleaning at Mong Ha Elderly Center of Macau Federation of Trade Unions (FAOM), Seac Pai Van Family and Community Service Center of General Union of Neighborhood Associations of Macau (UGAMM), and Centro de Dia Brilhoso da Vida of Caritas Macau. Communal areas such as assembly rooms, activity rooms, dining halls and washrooms, were cleaned and sanitized professionally to give the senior citizens a peace of mind.

In addition, Wendy Yu, Executive Vice President of Human Resources of MGM, led volunteers to spread festive cheer at the three centers, with the participation of Ng Siu Lai, President of UGAMM; Leong Lok Wa, Consultant and Vice-Director of Social Service of FAOM; and Pun Chi Meng, Secretary General of Caritas Macau respectively. The seniors were delighted by lion dance and singing performances, as well as fun games brought by the volunteers. As a token of blessings, MGM presented them with gift bags prepared by Fuhong Society of Macau, which contained oatmeal, longevity noodles, pre-packaged Chinese soup, MGM Lunar New Year banners, as well as assistive tools like magnifying nail-clipper.



Showing Love with Haircuts and Acupoint Massage



Furthermore, MGM volunteers gave haircuts to more than 100 seniors under its “Haircut for Love” program, a caring initiative introduced in 2015. The event took place before CNY to give a fresh makeover to the elderly at Mong Ha Elderly Center of Macau Federation of Trade Unions, Ka Ho Elderly Center of Macau Federation of Trade Unions, Seac Pai Van Family and Community Service Center of General Union of Neighborhood Associations of Macau, and Centro de Dia Brilhoso da Vida of Caritas Macau.

Earlier, MGM invited Paulo do Lago Comandante, President of Macau Association of Chinese Medicine Practitioners, to provide basic training on acupoint massage to MGM volunteers. During the haircut sessions, the volunteers who took the training course massaged the elderly and shared the techniques with them, which put a smile on their faces.



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Biden hails House passage of USD1.9T virus bill, now to Senate

ALAN FRAM,
WASHINGTON

THE House approved a USD1.9 trillion pandemic relief bill that was championed by President Joe Biden, the first step in providing another dose of aid to a weary nation as the measure now moves to a tense Senate.

"We have no time to waste," Biden said at the White House after the House passage yesterday [Macau time]. "We act now — decisively, quickly and boldly — we can finally get ahead of this virus. We can finally get our economy moving again. People in this country have suffered far too much for too long."

The new president's vision for infusing cash across a struggling economy to individuals, businesses, schools, states and cities battered by COVID-19 passed on a near party-line 219-212 vote. That ships the bill to the Senate, where Democrats seem bent on resuscitating their minimum wage push and fights could erupt over state aid and other issues.

Democrats said that mass unemployment and the half-million American lives lost are causes to act despite nearly \$4 trillion in aid already spent fighting the fallout from the disease. GOP lawmakers, they said, were out of step with a public that polling finds largely views the bill favorably.

"I am a happy camper tonight," Rep. Maxine Waters, D-Calif., said Friday. "This is what America needs. Republicans, you ought to be a part of this. But if you're not, we're going without you."

Republicans said the bill was too expensive and said too few education dollars would be spent quickly to immediately reopen schools. They said it was laden with gifts to Democratic constituencies like labor unions and funneled money to Democratic-run states they suggested didn't need it because their budgets had bounced back.

"To my colleagues who say this bill is bold, I say it's bloated," said House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif. "To those who say it's urgent, I say it's unfocused. To those who say it's popular, I say it is entirely partisan."

The overall relief bill wou-



ld provide \$1,400 payments to individuals, extend emergency unemployment benefits through August and increase tax credits for children and federal subsidies for health insurance.

It also provides billions for schools and colleges, state and local governments, COVID-19 vaccines and testing, renters, food producers and struggling industries like airlines, restaurants, bars and concert venues.

Moderate Democratic Reps. Jared Golden of Maine and Kurt Schrader of Oregon were the only two lawmakers to cross party lines. That sharp partisan divide is making the fight a showdown over whom voters will reward for heaping more federal spending to combat the coronavirus and revive the economy atop the \$4 trillion approved last year.

The battle is also emerging as an early test of Biden's ability to hold together his party's fragile congressional majorities — just 10 votes in the House and an evenly divided 50-50 Senate.

At the same time, Democrats were trying to figure out how to assuage liberals who lost their top priority in a jarring Senate setback Thursday.

That chamber's nonpartisan parliamentarian, Elizabeth MacDonough, said Senate rules require that a federal minimum wage increase would have to be dropped from the COVID-19 bill, leaving the proposal on life support. The measure would gradually lift that minimum to \$15 hourly by 2025, doubling the current \$7.25 floor in effect since 2009.

Hoping to revive the effort in some form, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., is considering adding a provision to the Senate version of the COVID-19 relief bill that would penalize large companies that don't pay workers at least \$15 an hour, said a senior Democratic aide who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal conversations.

That was in line with ideas floated Thursday night by Sens. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., a chief sponsor of the \$15 plan, and Senate Finance Committee Chair Ron Wyden, D-Ore., to boost taxes on corporations that don't hit certain minimum wage targets.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., offered encouragement, too, calling a minimum wage increase "a financial necessity for our families, a great stimulus for our economy and a moral imperative for our country." She said the House would "absolutely" approve a final version of the relief bill because of its widespread benefits, even if it lacked progressives' treasury goal.

While Democratic leaders were eager to signal to rank-and-file progressives and liberal voters that they would not yield on the minimum wage fight, their pathway was unclear because of GOP opposition and questions over whether they had enough Democratic support.

House Ways and Means Committee Chair Richard Neal, D-Mass., sidestepped a question on taxing companies that don't boost pay, saying of Senate Democrats, "I hesitate to say anything until they decide on a strategy."

Progressives were demanding that the Senate press ahead anyway on the minimum wage increase, even if it meant changing that chamber's rules and eliminating the filibuster, a tactic that requires 60 votes for a bill to move forward.

"We're going to have to reform the filibuster because we have to be able to deliver," said Rep. Pramila Jayapal, D-Wash.

Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, D-N.Y., another high-profile progressive, also said Senate rules must be changed, telling reporters that when Democrats meet with their constituents, "We can't tell them that this didn't get done because of an unelected parliamentarian."

Traditionalists of both parties — including Biden, who served as a senator for 36 years — have opposed eliminating filibusters because they protect parties' interests when they are in the Senate minority. Biden said weeks ago that he didn't expect the minimum wage increase to survive the Senate's rules. Democrats narrowly hold Senate control.

Pelosi, too, seemed to shy away from dismantling Senate procedures, saying, "We will seek a solution consistent with Senate rules, and we will do so soon."

The House COVID-19 bill includes the minimum wage increase, so the real battle over its fate will occur when the Senate debates its version over the next two weeks.

Democrats are pushing the relief measure through Congress under special rules that will let them avoid a Senate GOP filibuster, meaning that if they are united they won't need any Republican votes.

It also lets the bill move faster, a top priority for Democrats who want the bill on Biden's desk before the most recent emergency jobless benefits end on March 14.

But those same Senate rules prohibit provisions with only an "incidental" impact on the federal budget because they are chiefly driven by other policy purposes. MacDonough decided that the minimum wage provision failed that test.

Republicans oppose the \$15 minimum wage target as an expense that would hurt businesses and cost jobs. AP

this day in history

1954 US TESTS HYDROGEN BOMB IN BIKINI



The US has produced the biggest ever man-made explosion so far in the Pacific archipelago of Bikini, part of the Marshall Islands.

It is believed the hydrogen bomb was up to 1,000 times more powerful than the atomic bomb that destroyed Hiroshima.

It was so violent that it overwhelmed the measuring instruments, indicating that the bomb was much more powerful than scientists had anticipated.

The 15 megaton bomb delivered a force far more powerful than expected.

One of the atolls has been totally vaporised, disappearing into a gigantic mushroom cloud that spread at least 100 miles wide and dropping back to the sea in the form of radioactive fall-out.

The Atomic Energy Commission announced this was the first in a series of tests to be carried out in the area.

Tests first began in Bikini in 1946 after the natives were moved to the island of Rongerik, then to Ujelan a year later and to Kili in 1949.

This is the second H-bomb test in the area.

A 10.4 megaton bomb was exploded on 1 November 1952 at Enewetak, west of Bikini.

It destroyed one island and left a crater 175 feet deep.

It was hundreds of times more powerful than that used over Hiroshima.

Unlike that device which tapped energy by splitting atomic nuclei, the Enewetak weapon forced together nuclei of hydrogen to unleash an even greater destructive force.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

The 1954 Bikini bomb was the biggest man-made explosion until the USSR's 50-megaton test in 1961.

Three weeks after the Bikini bomb it emerged that a Japanese fishing boat, called Lucky Dragon, was within 80 miles (129 km) of the test zone at the time. Its 23 crew were severely affected by radiation sickness.

They were among 264 people accidentally exposed to radiation because the explosion and fall-out had been far greater than expected.

The original natives were granted \$325,000 in compensation and returned to Bikini in 1974. But they were evacuated four years later when new tests showed high levels of residual radioactivity in the region.

Twenty-three nuclear tests were carried out at Bikini between 1946 and 1958.



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Property of the Week



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Separate modern kitchen with a view with a separate utility room. All three bedrooms have the most beautiful views, two with en suite and a separate bathroom for the other bedroom. The owner owns a car park space and will consider selling separately for the right price. Viewing can be arranged anytime as the apartment is currently vacant.

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Houston Court, Coloane Village
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LET'S CONNECT



MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

STEVE MCMORRAN,
WELLINGTON

Auckland Covid outbreak hits cricket, sailing, rugby

THE fourth Twenty20 cricket international between New Zealand and Australia has been shifted and the first weekend of racing in the America's Cup sailing match has been postponed after new COVID-19 cases were reported in Auckland on Saturday.

Auckland was placed in limited lockdown for seven days from 6 a.m. (GMT+13)

yesterday with travel restrictions into and out of New Zealand's largest city, strict limits on public gatherings, and a ban on sports events.

The third Australia-New Zealand T20 is due to be played in Wellington on Wednesday and the fourth match of the five-match series will also be played in that city on Friday, both without crowds.

While Auckland is at alert level 3, the rest of New Zealand is at level 2 which has fewer restrictions but limits public gatherings to 100 people.

The last T20 of the series is due to be at Tauranga on March 7 and might be able to be played with crowds if New Zealand moves back to level 1.

The alert level changes were announced late Saturday after two new coronavirus cases were located in the community whi-



Supporters of Italy's Luna Rossa team join in the celebration after defeating Britain's INEOS Team UK in race eight of the Prada Cup on Auckland's Waitemata Harbour, last Sunday

ch could not directly be linked to earlier cases. Auckland recently returned to level 1 after a small community cluster of infections.

The Australia cricket team reportedly had already been reluctant to travel to Auckland because doing so likely would have requi-

red players to quarantine on their return home.

The 36th match for the America's Cup between Team New Zealand and Italy's Luna Rossa was due to begin on March 6 but the first weekend of racing now has been postponed. America's

Cup Events chairwoman Tina Symmans said the decision had been made early to give participants "some certainty in planning."

"ACE has always said that it wishes to hold as much of the racing under level 1 restrictions as possible," Symmans said. "But to

be prudent, ACE will apply for an exemption to race under Level 3 restrictions so as to keep as many options open as possible.

"However, racing will not occur before at least Wednesday, March 10. We need to understand all likely scenarios so that an updated racing schedule can be put in place whilst also ensuring the regulatory requirements are met."

Races in the America's Cup challenger series took place this month without crowds when Auckland was at level 2. A government exemption would be needed and strict protocols would have to be in place for racing to take place at level 3.

Auckland's popular Round the Bays run, which attracts tens of thousands of participants, was canceled yesterday.

"We respect the need to keep everyone safe and contain the spread of COVID-19," organizers said.

In Super Rugby, the Auckland-based Blues beat the Hurricanes in Wellington on Saturday and will base themselves outside of their home city until the alert level changes. The team is unable to train at level 3.

Coach Leon Macdonald said the Blues would "look at all options" on a base for at least the next seven days. Other matches in the New Zealand competition will be played without crowds at level 2. **AP**

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OPINION

World Views

Cathy O'Neil, MDT/Bloomberg



TAILORED ADS ARE KILLING THE INFORMED CONSUMER

In many ways, the tailored advertising that supports much of the internet works pretty well. It helps people with money figure out where to spend it with minimal effort and waste. But I'm afraid it could lead to the extinction a certain kind of human: the informed consumer.

The early internet was pretty useless for finding stuff. I'm an avid knitter, which is another way of saying that I collect yarn. I remember prospecting on the Alta Vista search engine in the mid-1990s, before Google: Most yarn stores didn't have websites, and even finding discussions was hard. The best resource for yarn stores back then was an actual book called the MilePost Guide — which, on my Alaskan honeymoon in 1997, took me and my shockingly patient new husband to every purveyor reachable by car.

Fast forward to now. Whenever I browse online, I'm accosted by luxury sellers displaying sexy jewel-toned reams of yarn like NSFW porn. As much as I might struggle to ignore it, I am susceptible — as evidenced by all the impulse-buy inventory in my basement, in tones of burgundy, leaf green and turquoise. Yet I see and buy only certain types of yarn, produced by big companies with ample marketing budgets. It's like strolling through an endless mall filled with national chain stores, every third of which is Yankee Candles.

Sure, with some effort I can seek out something different. I can go to conventions and specialized websites in search of rare, local brands. But I'm no longer as hungry for the yarn experience, in large part because it comes to me daily, sapping my volition. The overall experience is simultaneously convenient and lame, even as I feel utterly sated. I've gone from a passionate investigator to a passive consumer.

I recognize that my yarn experience is not among the world's great issues. Yet the phenomenon applies elsewhere, too. Consider financial services. I'm in no hurry to revisit the sexist and racist lending practices of the 1950s. But as recently as the 1990s, I could and did visit several different banks to compare their offerings, which were pretty much standard for anyone who walked in the door. Now, if I go online, each bank will eyeball my credit and — while I'm busy streaming Derry Girls — push out some tailored products designed to extract the maximum profit from me. I can't be an informed consumer, because I see only what they choose to show me. Instead of doing due diligence, I'm getting profiled and managed.

Another consequential example is the job market. As the economy recovers from the pandemic, people will be searching for work largely online. The main job sites — such as LinkedIn, Indeed and Monster — make money by finding the best matches between employer and candidate. This means the platforms will optimize by showing people the jobs that people like them have proven most likely to get, as opposed to the jobs they might actually want. Aside from the obvious risk of illegal discrimination, this will have the effect of limiting people's ambitions, since they might never see the more highly paid positions that, although harder to get, might be within reach.

Again, I'm not saying it's impossible to bypass the targeting. Savvy job seekers who push past the first few pages of listings might find that diamond in the rough. But I fear that by making things too easy, the age of automation might be allowing some of our most valuable skills to atrophy.

ROOSTER KILLS INDIAN MAN DURING BANNED COCKFIGHT

A man was killed by a rooster with a blade tied to its leg during an illegal cockfight in southern India, police said, bringing focus on a practice that continues in some Indian states despite a decades-old ban.

The rooster, with a 3-inch knife tied to its leg, fluttered in panic and slashed its owner, 45-year-old Thangulla Satish, in his groin last week, police inspector B. Jeevan said yesterday.

The incident occurred in Lothunur village of Telangana state.

According to Jeevan, Satish was injured while he prepared the rooster for a fight. "Satish was hit by the rooster's knife in his groin and started bleeding heavily," the officer said, adding that the man died on the way to a hospital.

Jeevan said police filed a case and were looking for over a dozen people involved in organizing the cockfight. If proven guilty, the organizers can be jailed for up to two years.

Cockfights are common in the southern Indian states of Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka despite a countrywide ban imposed in 1960. Animals rights activists have for long been calling to control the illegal practice, which is mainly organized as part of local Hindu festivals usually attended by hundreds of people, though the crowds sometimes swell to thousands. The cockfights are often held under the watch of powerful, local politicians and involve large sums of betting money.

'NOT A GOOD IDEA:' EXPERTS CONCERNED ABOUT POPE TRIP TO IRAQ

NICOLE WINFIELD & SAMYA KULLAB, VATICAN CITY

INFECTIONOUS disease experts are expressing concern about Pope Francis' upcoming trip to Iraq, given a sharp rise in coronavirus infections there, a fragile health care system and the unavoidable likelihood that Iraqis will crowd to see him.

No one wants to tell Francis to call it off, and the Iraqi government has every interest in showing off its relative stability by welcoming the first pope to the birthplace of Abraham. The March 5-8 trip is expected to provide a sorely-needed spiritual boost to Iraq's beleaguered Christians while furthering the Vatican's bridge-building efforts with the Muslim world.

But from a purely epidemiological standpoint, as well as the public health message it sends, a papal trip to Iraq amid a global pandemic is not advisable, health experts say.

Their concerns were reinforced with the news Sunday that the Vatican ambassador to Iraq, the main point person for the trip who would have escorted Francis to all his appointments, tested positive for COVID-19 and was self-isolating.

In an email to The Associated Press, the embassy said Archbishop Mitja Leskovar's symptoms were mild and that he was continuing to prepare for Francis' visit.

Beyond his case, experts note that wars, economic crises and an exodus of Iraqi professionals have devastated the country's hospital system, while studies show most of Iraq's new COVID-19 infections are the highly-contagious variant first identified in Britain.

"I just don't think it's a good idea," said Dr. Navid Madani, virologist and founding director of the Center for Science Health Education in the Middle East and North Africa at Harvard Medical School's Dana-Farber Cancer Institute.

The Iranian-born Madani



AP PHOTO

co-authored an article in The Lancet last year on the region's uneven response to COVID-19, noting that Iraq, Syria and Yemen were poorly placed to cope, given they are still struggling with extremist insurgencies and have 40 million people who need humanitarian aid.

In a telephone interview, Madani said Middle Easterners are known for their hospitality, and cautioned that the enthusiasm among Iraqis of welcoming a peace-maker like Francis to a neglected, war-torn part of the world might lead to inadvertent violations of virus control measures.

"This could potentially lead to unsafe or superspreading risks," she said.

Dr. Bharat Pankhania, an infectious disease control expert at the University of Exeter College of Medicine, concurred.

"It's a perfect storm for generating lots of cases which you won't be able to deal with," he said.

Organizers promise to enforce mask mandates, social distancing and crowd limits, as well as the possibility of increased testing sites, two Iraqi government officials said.

The health care protocols are "critical but can be managed," one government official told The Associated Press, speaking on condition of anonymity.

And the Vatican has taken its own precautions, with the 84-year-old pope, his 20-member Vatican entourage and the 70-plus journalists on the papal plane all vaccinated.

But the Iraqis gathering in the north, center and south

of the country to attend Francis' indoor and outdoor Masses, hear his speeches and participate in his prayer meetings are not vaccinated.

And that, scientists say, is the problem.

"We are in the middle of a global pandemic. And it is important to get the correct messages out," Pankhania said. "The correct messages are: the less interactions with fellow human beings, the better."

He questioned the optics of the Vatican delegation being inoculated while the Iraqis are not, and noted that Iraqis would only take such risks to go to those events because the pope was there.

In words addressed to Vatican officials and the media, he said: "You are all protected from severe disease. So if you get infected, you're not going to die. But the people coming to see you may get infected and may die."

"Is it wise under that circumstance for you to just turn up? And because you turn up, people turn up to see you and they get infected?" he asked.

The World Health Organization was diplomatic when asked about the wisdom of a papal trip to Iraq, saying countries should evaluate the risk of an event against the infection situation, and then decide if it should be postponed.

"It's all about managing that risk," said Maria Van Kerkhove, WHO's technical lead on COVID-19. "It's about looking at the epidemiologic situation in the country and then making sure that if that event is to take place, that it can take place as safely as possible." AP



Myanmar Security forces made mass arrests and appeared to use lethal force yesterday as they intensified their efforts to break up protests a month after the military staged a coup. There were reports of gunfire as police in Yangon, the country's biggest city, fired tear gas and water cannons while trying to clear the streets of demonstrators demanding that the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi be restored to power. Photos of shell casings from live ammunition used in assault rifles were posted on social media.



Bangladesh Protesters blocked a busy intersection in the capital to protest the death in prison of a writer and commentator who was arrested on charges of violating a sweeping digital security law that critics say stifles freedom of expression. Mushtaq Ahmed, 53, was arrested in Dhaka in May last year for making comments on social media that criticized the Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina government's handling of the coronavirus pandemic. He had been denied bail at least six times. It was not immediately clear how Ahmed died on Thursday.

Pakistan A trio of gunmen shot and killed a religious cleric, his teenage son and a student on the outskirts of Pakistan's capital Islamabad, police said, amid a rise in militant attacks. The killing took place in the Bhara Kahu neighborhood when Mufti Ikram Rehman was heading toward his car with his 13-year-old son and a seminary student.

UN human rights chief on Friday cited the need for an "independent and comprehensive assessment" of the rights situation in China's Xinjiang region, while emphasizing that activists, lawyers and rights defenders face unfair charges, detention and trials in China. U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet said her office is working to find "mutually agreeable parameters" for her to visit China, including Xinjiang. Efforts to arrange such a visit for the human rights commissioner date to before she took office in September 2018.